

Naval War College Review

Volume 71
Number 3 *Summer*

Article 19

2018

The Battleship Holiday: The Naval Treaties and Capital Ship Design

James P. McGrath

Robert C. Stern

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

McGrath, James P. and Stern, Robert C. (2018) "The Battleship Holiday: The Naval Treaties and Capital Ship Design," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 71 : No. 3 , Article 19.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol71/iss3/19>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

of the coach's dynamic personality on the field. Cameron makes the point that "[i]f Ken Niumatalolo is your neighbor, you think he's a great guy. But if you play football for Navy, in an instant, he can be your worst nightmare" (p. 107).

Cameron does a superb job recounting the intense rivalries that Navy has with not only Army and Air Force but Notre Dame. He describes the 2007 win over Notre Dame—after forty-three consecutive losses—as follows: "The night 'the Streak' died—the longest streak in NCAA history—eighty thousand fans at Notre Dame Stadium watched in stunned silence as Navy let go of forty-three years of misery, embarrassment, and frustration" (p. 136). He details the joy—and other emotions—of football games with Army and Air Force, with the overall winner receiving the Commander in Chief's Trophy. Few other writers can match Cameron's insights into and appreciation of the distinctive qualities of the Army-Navy game. "The annual bit of military theater, greater than any other game, makes the Army-Navy legacy a little sweeter. The nation's game" (p. 106).

Nonetheless, I struggled somewhat with the book. I found it difficult that Cameron seems to be telling two stories, in that as he writes about the chronology of Navy football he intersperses the story of Navy's fierce rivalries with Army, Air Force, and Notre Dame. At times the story was challenging to follow because I was reading about things from two different perspectives: one that portrayed a chronology, and another that recounted memorable games with Navy's leading rivals.

The appendices highlighting Navy's unforgettable games, unforgettable seasons, GOATS (read the book), players, coaches, and a potpourri of other

topics all add value and make this book a must-read for football fans across the country. Cameron has shined a spotlight on Navy's football program through its highs and lows, with colorful commentary that makes it an enjoyable read.

THOMAS J. GIBBONS



The Battleship Holiday: The Naval Treaties and Capital Ship Design, by Robert C. Stern. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2017. 272 pages. \$42.95.

Robert Stern, a writer of more than twenty books on naval matters over three decades, opens his latest effort by admitting that he is tackling a subject on which much has been written already.

The Battleship Holiday explores the history and technical design of capital ships that the five signatories to the 1922 Five-Power Treaty—Great Britain, the United States, Japan, France, and Italy—plus Germany built during and after the "battleship holiday" that the treaty imposed. His fresh approach to analyzing capital ship design and construction during this period addresses the ships and their innovations chronologically rather than along national lines. Throughout this chronology, he explores three major threads: diplomacy, technology, and operational performance. Stern offers that, while other treatments address one or two of these threads, his assessment of all three provides "more complete insight into the interplay of factors that led different nations to build different ships" (p. 10) to achieve their respective national goals.

Divided into two parts, the book first explores how capital ships evolved to the point at which the world's naval powers

decided to limit them. Beginning with the 1862 battle of Hampton Roads, Stern traces the evolution of capital ships up to the 1916 battle of Jutland. His threads run through ship design and construction as each nation emphasized characteristics important to its vision of the battleship's role. Stern steers clear of analyzing strategy and tactics except where necessary to show how different technical decisions combined with tactical developments, such as to produce Jutland's outcome. The chapter "The Art and Practice of Main-Battery Fire Control in 1916" demonstrates Stern's in-depth analysis of technological advancements by the various belligerents. In addition to gunnery and fire control, each country drew from Jutland different lessons on armor, propulsion, and machinery—many of them incorrect. Stern concludes the first section by describing the tension between liberal politicians and naval leaders as they attempted to curtail the exorbitant cost of maintaining a fleet of modern battleships. The resulting Washington Naval Treaty system placed specific restrictions on capital ships. The subsequent battleship building holiday succeeded in preventing unconstrained shipbuilding, but it did not inhibit ambitions to build better battleships.

The second half of the book tracks capital ship design and construction from 1922 to 1946. The idea of naval disarmament began to fray less than five years after its initiation, slowly at first and later accelerating to the point of dissolution. During the intervening years, naval architects fought to design ships that maximized war-fighting capability within the treaty's 35,000-ton restriction. Stern spends significant time discussing the technical details of various designs, including the sacrifices, benefits, and

political ramifications involved. He gives equal coverage to all the navies building capital ships, including their decisions on whether to follow the constraints the Washington Treaty system imposed. He also includes significant discussion of ships not built, and why. The chronological approach demonstrates how the different design decisions responded to or ignored the efforts of other nations.

Stern's assessment culminates with an analysis of the effectiveness of these battleships' offensive and defensive capabilities in combat. Direct comparison is nearly impossible, since only three engagements occurred that pitted new-generation battleships against each other. The German battleships *Bismarck* and *Scharnhorst* succumbed to their peers HMS *Prince of Wales* and HMS *Duke of York*, respectively, in battle at sea, but those actions included other vessels or aircraft that prevented a "fair fight." The other direct action between new-generation battleships consisted of USS *Massachusetts* (BB 59) battering the incomplete French battle cruiser *Jean Bart*, holed up in Casablanca's harbor. Stern assesses other surface actions, including the battleship duel in which the post-Jutland battleships USS *Washington* (BB 56) and USS *Alabama* (BB 57) sank the Japanese pretreaty battle cruiser *Kirishima*, and the cornering and scuttling of the German *Graf Spee* by British cruisers at the Río de la Plata. In almost every case, whether they resulted in sinking or survival, battleship-protection schemes underperformed. Surface action was no longer the norm—the majority of battleship damage and losses in the Second World War resulted from air attack, especially with aerial torpedoes.

Stern provides a fresh and highly technical assessment of the pinnacle

of naval warship design. But in doing so he demonstrates the futility of this construction. Bent on applying the lessons of Jutland to ensure victory in the next great naval battle, nations built the ultimate dreadnoughts, only to see them relegated to convoy protection and antiaircraft duty, untested in the fleet actions for which they were designed. While America, Britain, France, and Italy continued to operate battleships after the Second World War, the design and construction costs of battleships proved exorbitant in relation to their utility in the era of the aircraft carrier.

JAMES P. MCGRATH



Turkey and the West: Fault Lines in a Troubled Alliance, by Kemal Kirişçi. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2018. 309 pages. \$34.

Turkey's oscillation between the West and East is nothing new, nor is there a lack of literature on the topic. But what Kemal Kirişçi accomplishes in his most recent work is an insightful analysis of Turkey's history and its foreign policy by-products through the lens of the current security quandary. Most valuably, the book demonstrates the interaction among the various currents within Turkey and how they are creating an increasingly anti-Western foreign policy. Given the author's goal of elucidating Turkey's history up to the present day and reducing the confusion about what is behind its government's decision-making, his book offers the most authoritative work available.

Not long ago the United States was touting Turkey as a model for countries seeking to join the international liberal order, in particular for those trying to

reconcile Islam and democracy. Early in his tenure Recep Erdoğan gave a speech at Harvard in which he quoted Thomas Jefferson, praised democracy, and extolled the virtues of Turkey's eventual European Union (EU) accession. As recent as 2011, Erdoğan delivered a speech in Cairo that emphasized democracy and secularism as qualities intrinsic to Turkey. Yes, things can change in a hurry in the Middle East, but why and how did the esteem in which Turkey was held around the world recede so quickly?

The author provides an engaging picture of all the factors at play, many of which are rooted in domestic politics. He traces Turkey's history since World War II, focusing particularly on the period since the Gezi Park protests in 2013. Turkey has banned consumption of alcohol in public spaces, altered the content of educational materials in schools to align them more with Islam, curtailed personal freedoms, and detained journalists. Nowadays Erdoğan makes public comments demeaning the founder of the modern Turkish republic, Kemal Atatürk. Erdoğan is deploying an increasingly majoritarian form of democracy that excludes the 48.6 percent of the country that did not vote for his increased power in the April 2017 referendum. The situation in Turkey portends a mutually reinforcing nexus in which growing authoritarianism within the country's borders moves in parallel with a foreign policy increasingly at odds with that of the West.

In analyzing the international factors at play in Turkey's shift, Kirişçi gives due attention to the war in Syria and the migration crisis. But in addition to these better-known fault lines, what the author does exceptionally well is to explain how Europe and the United States are not without blame for fostering skepticism